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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 1248  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0645  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1920  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 5919  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4193  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 2100  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 000072

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STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA

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SUBJECT: CHILE MEDIA REPORT - JANUARY 22

Leading Stories

1. Chilean dailies highlighted President Barack Obama's first day in office. Front-page coverage also included the case of Chile's retired Air Force (FACH) General Ramon Vega, who was arrested for allegedly receiving illegal payments during the purchase of Belgian fighter jets in 1994.

U.S.-Related News

2. Lan Cargo, affiliated with Lan Airlines, will pay the U.S. Government a fine of US\$88 million dollars for breaking free competition regulations during the February 2003-2006 period. Specifically, Lan Cargo fixed fuel prices and other charges. The U.S. Government's probe included other 30 airlines (El Mercurio, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record, circ. 129,000, 1/22).

3. Arturo Valenzuela, a Chilean scholar who heads the Center for Latin American Studies at Georgetown University, appears mentioned as a possible candidate to become the WHA Assistant Secretary of State. His strongest contender could be Julia Sweig, Director for Latin American Studies at the Council of Foreign Relations (El Mostrador, liberal, online daily, 1/21).

4. The judge investigating the case of Chile's retired Air Force (FACH) General Ramon Vega and other three high-ranking retired officers is examining the role of Bartolome Dezerega, a member of the Christian Democratic Party. The military officers were arrested for allegedly receiving US\$ 15 million dollars in illegal payments during the purchase of Belgian fighter jets in 1994. Mr. Dezerega reportedly deposited US\$ 3 million dollars in banks in the United States (La Tercera, conservative, independent, circ. 101,000, 1/22). The probe has revealed that some high-ranking retired FACH officers received deposits in their accounts at Coutts & Co. Bank; Riggs National Bank, in Washington, D.C.; and Espirito Santo Bank, in Miami (La Nacion, government-owned, editorially independent, circ. 4,200, 1/22). A bank account with First Union Bank Int. in New York was also mentioned (El Mercurio, 1/22).

Local

5. The Chamber of Deputies approved introducing a constitutional reform to the Chilean electoral system that would allow all qualified citizens to register automatically and to vote

voluntarily. The text will return to the Senate, where it had been approved two weeks ago, to review some modifications (La Tercera, 1/22).

Cuba

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¶6. Six letters sent by a Chilean citizen and other prominent Cuban dissidents are sitting on President Michelle Bachelet and Foreign Minister Alejandro Foxley's desks since early January. The notes request a meeting with President Bachelet during her upcoming official visit to Cuba and denounce the human rights violations on the island. The letters have not yet been answered (El Mostrador, 1/22).

Editorials

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¶7. Editorial entitled "Obama's Economic Guidelines" "Although inaugural speeches do not set an academic definition to a government's work plan, the meticulous selection of issues, careful rhetoric, consciousness of the fact that every word will be scrutinized, and Obama's talent for using the language and communicating his ideas, leads one to think that what he said about economic matters reflects the core of his beliefs in this area.... It is a modern, eclectic and pragmatic vision of the economy, which understands the power of the individual, competition and creative forces, and comprehends the need for resorting to the State to bail out from important jams such as the ongoing one..." (El Mercurio, 1/22).

¶8. Opinion piece by author and academic Cristian Warnken "O Captain! My Captain" "I want to believe in this man who just read his speech to a tired world that is perplexed and full of fear. I want to believe in those winged words that come out his mouth and his ancestral African blood. I want to believe again in the grandeur of a leader.... I see Obama's serene and pure smile. I listen to his words, almost pronounced in a trance, from the heart. And I cannot think any more except for repeating Whitman's verses: 'O Captain, My Captain....' Will this new captain be able to sail this ship, loaded with bad omens, to a seaport, and have someone re-write this song in a future we cannot see yet? (El Mercurio, 1/22).

¶9. Opinion column by Alberto Lopez-Hermida, Professor of Political Communication at University of Los Andes, entitled "Celebrating with Intelligence" "Barack Obama is human, a politician, and a neophyte. There is no doubt that today is a day for celebrations, but it also needs urgent realism. In Chile we have already suffered the consequences of celebrating beyond the necessary the novelty in power" (La Segunda, conservative, afternoon daily, circ. 33,000, 1/21).

¶10. Opinion piece by Jose Jara, Director of FLACSO-Chile think tank, "From 'Yes We Can' to 'Yes We Should'" "The time has come to go past rhetoric to action.... The new President faces a Latin America that has historically disconnected from the directions imposed by the United States. Thus, this will become a unique challenge.... Therefore, Obama has an opportunity to go beyond the solutions that have already been used to solve the problems in the region. During the latest U.S. Administrations, Latin America has not been an issue on its agenda. Now is time not only to acknowledge the 'we can' but that 'we should'" (La Segunda, 1/21).

SIMONS